

A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS,
SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS AND ABSENT PARENTS ON DELINQUENT
BEHAVIORS AMONG YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

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The objective of this study is to examine the impact of parent-child relationships, socioeconomic factors, and absent parents and delinquent behavior among youth. An attempt is made to determine whether the three independent variables (parent-child relationships, socioeconomic factors and absent parents) have any significant relationship on the dependent variables. Questionnaires were administered randomly to juveniles at the Cobb County Juvenile Court in Marietta, Georgia. The theoretical orientation used in this research were based on the sociological perspective, socialization, and psychological theories.

The major results of the study are that of parent-child relationship, socioeconomic factors, and absent parent and delinquent behaviors among youth.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Young people today are growing up in a less stable society, exposed to rapid changes in our economic system our communities, and families. The stress, lack of a sense of contribution and belonging, loneliness, and emotional pain many young people feel are evident in the growing social problems we have seen over the past fifteen years. Drug and alcohol abuse, thefts, teenage pregnancy, suicide, truancy, and high school drop-outs have been rising steadily.

The number one cause of death among adolescents in this country is accidents, mainly car accidents under the influence of drugs and alcohol. This is followed by suicide as the second major cause of death among teenagers. Young people seem to have difficulty finding meaning and purpose in life, establishing life goals, and more so, committing themselves to achieving such goals (Moore, 1982).

History is replete with the theme of elders believing that the younger generation has abandoned the most important attitudes, values, and beliefs of their parents, and that each succeeding group of youngsters

almost ensures that society's ruin is imminent (Bynum and Thompson 1989). It is evident that delinquent behaviors among youth are increasing universally and researchers are continuously striving to obtain more information on the causes of such behaviors.

A comparison of the total statistical records of juvenile delinquent offenses for 1987 (15,222) and 1988 (17,709), showed marked increases and a few decreases in some areas. There was an increase of 2,487 (109%) change cases in 1988. Fraud and sex offenses decreased by 7 percent and 4 percent respectively. On the other hand, bodily injury and rape increased by 34 and 123 percent respectively. In addition in 1987 there were 1,864 youth within the 13 to 16 year age range in detention, whereas the 1988 figures showed 1,925, which was equivalent to a percent change of 19.0. In that same year the detention among Black males and females rated highest with 1,956 and 505. (Juvenile Court Records 1988).

Maladjustment and delinquent behavior of children and adolescents are among the most serious problems of our society. These children and adolescents need to be helped to avoid social behaviors. Deviant behavior cannot be treated alike in all children due to the

different circumstances under which it occurs (Friedlander, 1980). There are many essential factors that determine what happens to the delinquent child, such as, parents' economic status, customs of the local community, and cultural patterns of the social group to which the child belongs.

There are several theories concerning the causes of delinquency. Some theories deal with the biological and hereditary influences of the child.

Another important theory in the cause of delinquency is that of the deviant subculture. This theory required certain forms of delinquent activity that are essential for the performance of the dominant roles supported by the subculture.

The youth who exhibit delinquent behavior patterns need much help in terms of how they can adopt to societal rules and changes, and conduct themselves in ways which are acceptable to society (Friedlander 1980).

Also, consideration must be given to the measure of treatment to be received and the degree of how the deviant act is perceived by those in authority and the rest of the society. For instance, a child who committed a deviant act may be referred to counseling through an agency, but another child who committed a

similar crime, may be arrested, tried, and sentenced for the same misdemeanor. This aspect of delinquency also view the unacceptable behaviors as being learned. The acquisition of such behavior patterns may have been obtained through the child's exposure to deviant patterns of behavior within the surrounding cultural and societal environments.

It is determined that deviant behavior can become a social problem when it is continuous, chronic, and widespread. Also, it is perceived by a substantial and significant part of the population as nonproductive and threatening to the well-being of society. Thus, juvenile delinquency is a form of deviant behavior because it involves the violation of norms by children and youth. However, this form of deviant behavior comes to national attention because many of the important societal norms have been violated. These norms have been categorized into criminal and/or juvenile laws. Thus, juvenile delinquency receives a great deal of attention from scholars, civic leaders, law enforcement officers, and the mass media (Bynum and Thompson 1989).

The causes of delinquency may be classified into three categories namely: individual, home and neighborhood, and an understanding of the delinquent

child's family environment which are crucial in assessing his problems. These areas include the parent-child relationship, socioeconomic factors, and absence of one or both parents. Though there are numerous studies on juvenile delinquency, only a few attempt to illustrate the impact of familial environment and related support systems on the subject. However, this paper is designed to identify these variables and their relationships to deviant behaviors in juveniles.

Statement of the Problem

There are three trends in the study of relationship between family background variables and juvenile delinquency. The physiological view point focuses on the poor and maladaptive styles of family relations. Parents who experience much financial difficulties and who tend not to be involved with their children may cause these children to be susceptible to delinquent behaviors. Research also suggests that children who become juvenile offenders are exposed to socialization routines. These routines are characterized by weak parent-child attachment which fail to instill in children concern about the consequences of their behavior on others. (Steven, 1983).

The second direction focuses on the socioeconomic situation as it relates to levels of delinquency in the form of social class and crime. Studies show that the socioeconomic status of the family sets the stage and climate for the general development and outcome of children as they interact in such environments. Also, it has been found that predicting behavioral differences across social positions are difficult to test in modern societies. If this is the case, it is not possible to entertain the same expectations with respect to the relationship between class and crime in both modern and developing societies. Nor is it surprising that controversy should arise due to the discrepancy in findings involving studies made in modern societies. Braithwaite did a study of self-reported juvenile crime, all of which found that lower class juveniles were no more criminal than middle class juveniles (Axenroth, 1983).

There are some complications in the study of family structure effects on delinquency. The complexities arise in the correlation of non-traditional family circumstances with socioeconomic level and minority group membership that is conducted across social subgroups. Census statistics linking family structure

and poverty are even more striking. The figures indicate that the number of children living in single mother households more than doubled from 1960 to 1975 (Farnworth, 1984).

The third area looks at the absent parent and its relationship to delinquent behaviors in juveniles. The relevance of the factor of parental absence to the development of juvenile delinquency has been indicated by many previous investigations. Studies found that a number of delinquent youth come from homes in which there was a noticeable absence of either parent. Many views point to the fact that fathers play important roles in the moral development of the child. This is especially true in cases of male children. In such situations, a male child may not be exposed to the male's behavior and moral values. This view holds that such a child will experience difficulties in moral development (Daum, 1983).

This study will discuss these three trends as they relate to juvenile delinquency: (1) parent-child relationship; (2) socioeconomic factors; and (3) parental absence.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to examine and determine the effects of the following variables that could affect delinquent behaviors: parent-child relationships, socioeconomic level, and the absence of either parent or both. The objectives are as follows:

1. To examine weaknesses in the parent-child relationship as they relate to delinquency.
2. To examine and show that family backgrounds play key roles in the development of juvenile delinquency.
3. To identify and examine the family relationships and interactions of delinquent and non-delinquent youth.
4. To identify the family background variables that are predictors of juvenile delinquency.
5. To study the relationships of female-dominated household on delinquency.
6. To investigate the relationship between social class and delinquent tendencies and criminal behaviors.
7. To understand delinquency in both male and female youth, adolescents and younger children.
8. To show that family background play a key role in the etiology of juvenile delinquency.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The subject of juvenile delinquency has aroused much interest among social scientists and other researchers of different backgrounds. These scholars have identified several causes of delinquent behaviors which range from biological, psychological, familial, and socioeconomic factors. Also individual uniqueness and differences play important roles in how a delinquent child perceives his role in the society. Thus, this presentation of the review of literature will be discussed under three subheadings: 1) parent-child relationship and delinquent behavior; 2) socioeconomic factors and delinquent behaviors; and 3) parental absence and delinquent behavior.

To begin our study of the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency, two basic questions must be answered: First, who is a juvenile?; and second, what is delinquency? A juvenile is a child between the ages of 7 and 16. These children are considered old enough to know right from wrong and to understand the consequences of their actions, and are held legally responsible for

their law violating behavior. The child over the age of 7 is not viewed as an adult. Typically, adulthood is not reached until after the age of puberty, when expectations of work, marriage, and other "adult" activities are assumed. Whereas, an adult is perceived as a man or woman who is physically grown and has reached mature size and strength. Since the child labor laws has changed, youth experiences a longer period of dependency on the family and an extended delay before assuming the responsibilities of adulthood. Thus, the concept of adolescence is socially created to describe that period of life between childhood and adulthood. Juvenile refers to any person under the legal age of majority (Bynum & Thompson 1989).

There are several definitions of delinquency, however, these definitions can be classified into three categories. The sociological and dramaturgical analysis suggested these three:

1. **The legal definition.** Here the emphasis is almost entirely on the act, the norm/violating behavior that is legally classified as juvenile delinquency.

2. **The role definition.** The focus is primarily on the actor, the juvenile whose role performance is identified as delinquent.
3. **The societal response definition.** This approach concentrates more on the audience, the members of the social group or society that reacts to the actor and the act and finally determines whether an act of juvenile delinquency has actually been committed.

These definitional categories are not mutually exclusive stated Bynum and Thompson (1989). They differ mainly in emphasis and are therefore best understood as three vital dimensions of juvenile delinquency, and all must be considered together in order to formulate a superego. The superego is an antithetical or opposite force that restrains the impulsive id. The superego is developed in the individual through socialization, and represents socially conditioned and culturally learned moral values and a sense of right and wrong. It includes the formation of the conscience and an ego ideal, (Haskell and Yoblonsky, 1978:569).

Parent-Child Relationship and Delinquent Behavior

Children are the number one resource of our society. The issues young people struggle with today

may be tomorrow's social problems unless they learn to face their struggles in a constructive way. Children need to learn skills that will help them deal with the confusion and difficulties they experience. Therefore, socialization and education, in a broader sense, mean a way of preparing them for life. Virtually everybody with whom an individual comes into contact can influence these two processes (Bossard, 1953). The child sees the parents as role models and person who transmit rules of behavior. The parents may punish or reward the child when certain behaviors are displayed. For example, middle class parents most likely would withdraw their affection to show disapproval of non-compliance. Whereas, the parents in the lower socioeconomic strata may exhort to physical punishment. This causes aggression to build up in the child's mind. Moreover, a child whose socialization is full of continuous internal and external conflicts within his family, may be predisposed to become delinquent. Adolescence is the crucial stage in a child's life and there is a need for sharply defined values, rules, and roles. Thus, if his confusions which adolescents experience are not clarified, they may turn to the delinquent subculture. In the past, the family, school, and church were the

primary institutions that took on these responsibilities. But with the growing economic issues which confront families today, hundreds of children spend less time with their families than in previous generations (Campbell, 1969).

Statistics show that 60 percent of all married women work; the number of single-parent households is increasing due to the rising number of teenage pregnancies and divorces. As a result, it is difficult for families alone to function as the only institution that provides young people with skills, coping mechanisms, and role models for living constructive, satisfying lives (Bigner, 1979). Yet society expects the family to be mainly responsible for the socialization of their children.

Though there are numerous studies on juvenile delinquency, only a few attempt to show the impact of the familial environment and related support systems on delinquency. As is well known, delinquent acts do not just happen. Their development occur over a period of time through a series of stages. For example, some delinquent behaviors, such as vandalism, may happen unintentionally (Lofland, 1969).

The sociological perspective views delinquency from the social context in which it occurs. This perspective has three approaches which are: 1. the functionalist approach, 2. conflict approach, and 3. the interactionist approach.

The functionalist approach views society as a social system comprised of a network of interrelated and interdependent parts. Consequently, it regards delinquency primarily as the result of some type of breakdown in the overall functioning of basic social institutions in society. Next, the conflict approach sees society as being comprised of a variety of heterogeneous groups all competing for the highly valued resources society has to offer. These include wealth, power, and prestige. Consequently, juvenile delinquency tends to be seen as the result of conflicting values held by members of various social groups who must socially interact with one another. Then, the interactionist approach portrays the society as a product of the shared expectations held by individuals as they socially interact face-to-face on a daily basis. Thus, juvenile delinquency is viewed as a matter of social definition that arises out of the course of social interaction, (Bynum & Thompson 1989).

Another theory stresses how the physiological and psychological personality developments of the child can impact on certain behavior patterns. For example, a child may feel insecure, rejected, inadequate, and that there are no chances of being successful through legitimate avenues. Thus, the child may exhibit antisocial behaviors such as stealing. There is evidently an ever growing criminal subculture to which a high percentage of children are exposed. The insecure and rejected child may turn to this subcultural group for solace and acceptance. This subculture is characterized by illegal money making activities such as stealing, gambling, and selling of dangerous addictive drugs. Moreover, there exists serious conflicts within or without such groups which result in gang fights and other acts of violence, (Bynum & Thompson 1989).

There are yet two other theories which explain delinquent behaviors among youth. One is based on the assumption that a society should be cohesive and unified with actions and attitudes necessary for its optimal ultimate goals and benefits. This view holds that delinquency results from "cracks" in a societal setting where "strained" contrary behaviors develop. The concept gives the idea that delinquent behaviors go

against norms of the society. The second of these societal based theories assumes that the society is "fragmented" and "divisive". The primary effort of the society must be to "control" its people so that society can function even on a marginal level, (Baker, 1969).

All of the above theories are based on why a person may break laws and how a society is constructed in order to constrain the number of people who will do so.

The Gluecks' study of 500 institutionalized boys, and a control group of identical members, concluded that the relationship between the boys and their parents influenced their behaviors rather than the fact that they lived in the slums. The researchers maintained that if the child's family life was "adequate," the chances of him being delinquent were 3 in 100 (Glueck & Glueck, 1950).

Supporters of the biological aspects of delinquency point out that the child may inherit certain genetic traits which can trigger certain unacceptable behaviors, and later cause the child to become delinquent. Some of the inherent constitutional characteristics are based on intelligence, aggressive tendencies, and hyper activity. Then the child's behavior is over time molded by the social environment, first at home, and later at school.

However, the research on genetic determinants of antisocial behavior is not conclusive, but some evidence was reported. The studies linked juvenile delinquency to brain damage and mental retardation. An estimated 1 percent of brain pathology results in lowered mind or restrictive controls which lead to episodes of violent behavior. Such youth tend to be hyperactive, impulsive, emotionally unstable, and unable to inhibit themselves when they are attracted to a strong and seemingly overpowering stimulus (Anolik, 1983).

Bonding and attachment are the two most basic parenting abilities. These abilities are naturally occurring. When there is an impairment or incapacity in these abilities, there will be something "unnatural" about the parent-child relationship. A parent-child relationship without adequate attachment has a basic, and perhaps fatal, flaw. The process of attachment reflects the growing trust and security the child finds in his parents. Additionally, the level of attachment is reflective of the sense held by the child that his parent is the single individual, at that time, suitable to facilitate his survival and development. (Bolton 1983).

Hirschi, (1969), also emphasized that the closer the child's attachment to the parents enhances a stronger bond in the parent-child relationships. These bonds are usually developed during the socialization process in early childhood and continued throughout adolescence (Baker, 1988). According to Stouthamer and Loeber, (1988), delinquent behavior started in early childhood due to uncorrected unacceptable behaviors and poor educational achievement. These predictors vary in degrees of delinquency and if incorrectly handled can lead to chronic delinquent acts. For example, a young child may indulge in petty thefts, telling simple lies, or present minor problem behaviors which are slighted by the parents. If such behaviors are persistent and improperly handled, the child may assume that it is alright to defy authority.

Likewise during the period of dependency and risk the child needs supervision which is an essential ingredient for survival. While extreme measures are probably rare, general attitudes toward parental discipline focused on the unquestioned authority of the parent. As time passed, attitudes toward children changed, and laws were passed to protect the rights of children. Corporal punishment is still used, but laws

prohibit excessive physical abuse. Today attitudes toward parental discipline vary, but every state has laws designed to protect children from parental abuse. Discipline in the American family ranges from corporal punishment to no punishment at all, with virtually everything in between. Strong and De Vaule (1986:375-377) summarized contemporary childbearing strategies into the following categories:

1. **Authoritarian.** Typically require absolute obedience; parents maintaining control seems most important; "Because I said so" is typical response to child's questioning of authority. More typical of lower and working class families.
2. **Permissive.** Child's freedom of expression and autonomy are valued; parents are sometimes manipulative using such terminology as "do what we want you to do because you want to do it"; typical of middle class families.
3. **Authoritative.** Relies on positive reinforcement and infrequent punishment; encourages autonomy within reasonable limits, more typical of upper middle and upper class families.

No doubt, parental discipline is related to delinquency in a number of ways. In virtually every

state parents can petition their own children to juvenile court for refusing to obey them. Usually handled under the umbrella of "incorrigibility," this type of misbehavior is treated as a status offense (Bynum & Thompson, 1989).

Parental discipline influences the development of the juvenile in a multitude of other ways which may lead to delinquency. For instance, studies show that children who are subjected to parental violence are more likely to become delinquent than those from nonviolent homes.

Therefore, the unavailability of necessary physical and emotional resources is a characteristic risk factor in the assessment of violence potential in any family. Early surveys of maltreating family environments pointed toward a marked scarcity of physical resources. Basically, there appeared to be an over representation of lower socioeconomic (SES) status families in this group (Gil, 1970). This general deprivation is escalated by continuing resources inhibitors such as low educational and occupational levels (Holmes, 1973) and high notes of unemployment (Young, 1964). The SES predictors failure to compete in the outside world are joined by similar factors in the family (Bolton, 1983).

Parents engaging in maltreatment appear to be younger at the birth of the first child than nonmaltreating parents (Homes, 1978). This raises the potential for a longer challenging career during which times more children are home in close succession. Thus, the time likely to be spent with each child is observed and causes a threat to the children. Further, such parents do not possess the personal emotional strengths necessary to carry the relationship through the stresses of emotional deprivation.

Research also shows that maltreating parents more often than not have experienced deprivation in physical and emotional resources in their own childhood. This background frequently leads to aberrant emotional needs in them as parents, which contribute to a perception of the child even when he or she was not. These are the parents who were isolated from predictable sources of physical and emotional support. Not surprisingly, these parents turn to their children with expectations that parenthood would enhance their own impoverished emotional resources. The parenting skills that might have compensated for their great needs are largely unavailable (Steinmez & Strauss, 1974). This new role is unfamiliar to the child and failure in it often leads

to frustration and aggression from the parent, who expects and needs more. Thus, the child may become delinquent because his basic psychological needs were not fulfilled. While parental violence is linked to delinquency, strict discipline by parents is not. The McCords and Zola study (1959) discovered that the consistency of discipline was more important in insulating against delinquency than the method used. Similarly, Hamner and Turner (1985) found that harsh treatment was less damaging to children's self-esteem than were lack of interest and lack of consistency in the interaction between parent and child. They suggested that parents adhere to the following guidelines if punishment is to be successful:

1. Before punishment is administered, the child should know clearly what the expectations for his behavior are and what consequences will occur if these expectations are not met.
2. Punishment should follow the act immediately.
3. Punishment needs to be deserved and understood.
4. Punishment needs to be related to the act.
5. Punishment should be administered within a context of love and respect (Hamner and Turner, 1985:45). It is stressed in the social learning

and social control theories that parental influence in helping a child to internalize norms and values, develop a sense of social attachment, and refrain from committing delinquent acts.

The family is the primary and most important influence in the socialization of their children. The roles of parents are to supervise and train the child. Also, parents of delinquent children lack involvement with their children, provide poor supervision, and administer inadequate or erratic discipline. Moreover, some of these parents are themselves are not law-abiding citizens. Thus providing examples of deviant behaviors and values that their offspring may imitate.

In addition, many delinquent youth grow up in families which experience diversities such as marital conflict, divorce, persistent parental illness, poverty, or low socioeconomic status. Though childhood experiences within these conditions can result in delinquency, these factors are not necessarily true for all delinquents. However, the chances of delinquency among youth exposed to these conditions are greater and contribute to the 40 percent of crime rate in 1980 felonies (Moore, 1982).

Raschke & Raschke, 1979 stated that family conflicts appear to affect children's self-concepts. When the self-concepts of children in intact single parent, and blended families were compared, the authors found that family structure itself was not a significant factor, but perceived that family conflict was. Children who perceived greater conflict within the family had lower self-esteem than those who did not perceive that conflict existed. Age, race, sex, and number of siblings did not appear to be related to self-concept. The higher the perceived level of parental happiness, the higher the self-concept of the child.

Life demands cause some parents to abuse or neglect their children which can result in the children developing a sense of low self-esteem or becoming delinquent. It is difficult to accept the possibility of a parent rejecting a child as a result of the "costs" of parenthood, yet it does occur. Two major factors make it possible: 1. The rejections not often conscience, and, 2. the rejection is not direct rejection of the child but of the controls that milate against violence or rejection in the parent. The natural control against parental rejection or violence

are the bonding and attachment mechanisms built into the parent-child relationship (Bolton, 1983).

For well over forty years researchers have been trying to determine the psychological factors which affected delinquent youth. A study of 326 boys whose ages range from 12 to 18 was done in a residential juvenile center. The purpose of this study was to advance etiological theory and improve treatment. After reviewing the literature on topologies of delinquency, Gold and Petronio, 1980, concluded that the families of topologies yielded more consistent results than that of kinds of offenses committed by delinquents, or on the social conditions in which offenders live. Hewitt and Jenkins (1946), identified three "fundamental patterns of maladjustment." Two of these patterns were labeled socialized and unsocialized aggressions. The third was labeled over-inhibited. Initially, the delinquents' relationship with peers showed that the socialized related well, whereas, the unsocialized were isolated. Thus, the researchers attributed the differences in attitudes to the juveniles' child rearing experiences. They postulated that the unsocialized aggressions had experienced parental rejection early in their lives. In contrast, the socialized have had conflicts with their

parents during early adolescence. Gold and Mann (1976), also found that some youth bolstered low self-esteem and low grades by committing delinquent act (Atwood, Gold, & Taylor, 1989).

Yet another focus of the parent-child relationship, especially in good communication is also important in affecting the child's behavior. For instance, a child who loves and respects his parents may reflect on the values learned from them when he is tempted to deviate from that value system. Thus, as the affectional identification with the parents increases, the likelihood of committing the delinquent act may decline. It is also suggested that a child without a family or with weak parent-child attachment is more likely to become delinquent. Also, the prolonged separation of a child from its mother during the first five years of life is another probable cause of delinquent character development (Baker, 1988).

Moreover, the child who is unattached to his parents is more likely to be free to join gangs in order to find his identity. However, the child may or may not have had the predisposition to be delinquent prior to becoming the gang member. Also the unattached child does not have to consider the consequences of his

actions in relation to how his family feels about his behavior. There is some controversy about the parent-child attachment theory. Nye, McCord and McCord feel that there is no difference in delinquent behaviors in those whose homes were broken before five years of age and those whose homes were broken later (Nye, 1973). Their research shows that children living with both parents prior to age five are just as likely to commit delinquent acts as children separated from one or both parents, during this period. Herbert Zucker started his study with the hypothesis that affectional identification with the parent is sufficient or lacking in the delinquent child. He studied delinquent and non-delinquent groups of 25 Manhattan public school boys respectively. The two groups were approximately equivalent in age, race, socioeconomic background, and tested intelligence. Comparison of the two groups showed that the delinquents tended to show less affectional attachment to their parents. Also, they retaliated against their parents more often by engaging in disapproved behavior, and to obey parents less often (Zucker, 1953).

Another factor which affects the parent-child relationship is that of excessive mobility which is

generally accompanied by increased delinquency. Family mobility means that the child lacks identification with the community. Maud Merrill claimed that her delinquent sample was significantly differentiated from her control group in this respect. Almost half of the delinquents she studied were either antagonistic or indifferent towards their community. On the other hand, the non-delinquents were found to be much more likely to identify themselves with the community (Merrill, 1957).

Thus, it can be concluded that juvenile delinquency is a breakdown in the emotional attachment between the parent and child and a minimizing of the child's sense of responsibility to the community.

In addition, studies in group homes have shown that behaviors suggestive of a reinforcing relationship with an adult and of adult teaching are inversely related to self-reported delinquency among adolescents living in group homes. Adolescents living in natural family settings completed several self-report measures of delinquency and drug use. These reports were to determine whether their perception that parents or peers disapproved of their drug use and delinquency would make them less likely to engage in such behaviors (Braukmann, 1981). Interactions between boys and their parents were

directly observed and rated for talk, proximity, social teaching, and negative interaction behavior. Results suggested that perceived approval or disapproval by parents and peers is related to delinquency and drug use among adolescents.

The question of social and indirect controls is of importance to the determining the motive for certain behaviors displayed by the child. The conceptions of right and wrong held by the child equal those of parents much more closely than those of any other group. Through intimate and constant contacts parents become the most crucial agents in the internalization of the mores. Indirect controls may be exhibited because of the children's desire to please the parent, and these are clearly related to their acceptance or rejection of the parent. The child who has a strong identification with the parent is extremely reluctant to disappoint that parent (Nye, 1973). Whereas, the child who rejects the parent may deliberately indulge in delinquent acts to hurt the parent.

It is interesting to note why some children choose to become delinquent. Though delinquency may be widely seen as a group phenomenon, the deviant act is determined by individual choice whether tentative or

purposeful. Few parents teach their children deviant behavior, yet the home conditions seem to play a large role in the child's acquisition of deviant values. Southerland, who claimed that deviant behavior was learned, discussed five processes by which the circumstances in the home are related to delinquency:

1. The child may assimilate by observation within the home an attitude regarding respect or disrespect for the law, as well as the attitudes and behavior patterns of deviancy.
2. Parents determine the geographic location and social class of the home within the community.
3. The parents also make value judgements determining prestige of other's behavior.
4. A child can withdraw or be driven from an unhappy home, and the resulting isolation increase delinquent associations.
5. The home may be neutral and fail to teach the child inhibitions against delinquency (Sutherland, 1957).

A child who is affected by poor parent-child relationship may feel insecure, inadequate, incompetent, have a low self-esteem and self-confidence. However, research is still being done to determine certain

aspects of delinquency in relation to parent-child attachment.

Socioeconomic Factors and Delinquent Behaviors

There are theories which suggest that children within the lower class have higher rates of delinquency because they have little respect for, and do not establish intimate ties with their parents. These children struggle to survive under severe to mild rates of poverty. The parents of such children are usually under great stress to provide the mere basic needs of their children. Also because of the intensive stress, many parents may be too harsh, irritable, inconsistent, neglectful or preoccupied with financial concerns.

Both married women and single women with young children have flooded the job market during the last decade. The high cost of living forced these women to fill both provider and child-rearing roles. But given the limited opportunities, the cost of day-care, the need to maintain the household, and the felt need to stay home with the children such women face a constant battle within themselves (Ellwood, 1987).

During the 1970's, the proportion of U.S. households maintained by women grew at a faster rate than that of any other type of family living

arrangement. A 51 percent increase in the number of such households occurred between 1970 and 1979, compared with a 34 percent increase in families maintained by men and a 7 percent increase in families maintained by married couples. The increase was even more striking for families with children under 18 years (5.3 million), in the home. Such households increased by 81 percent for women, while those for men rose by 65 percent. Half the children in households supported by women lived below the official poverty threshold. Thus, because families are the backbone of society, the growth in the number of families likely to suffer social and economic deprivation is of particular concern (Family Planning Perspectives, 1982). Another group which needs special mention is that of the "underclass" population which can be found in the poorest neighborhoods in central cities. These "slum areas" are concentrated with poor people crowded together and isolated as middle-class families move out. Their experiences include deprivation, as children grow up poor; inferior education, as central city schools decay; and limited opportunity, as low-job skills evaporate or move out of the city. Crime and drugs add additional elements. Thus, children living in this environment see few acceptable role models, limited

opportunity, a poor educational system, intimidating yet respected criminals, and a decaying infrastructure. At best, such children are left with despair. They see no opportunity of joining the mainstream they view on television. They have little reason to believe that something they do can change their lives, since all their friends are poor. There is no doubt, a group which is so isolated geographically, economically, and socially will become an underclass (Ellwood, 1987).

On the other hand, a fraction of this populace will become obsessed with materialism as portrayed on television and other commercials. Therefore, like most young Americans who are material girls and boys, the poor adolescents crave for the glamorous clothes, cars and jewelry they advertised. These commercials are filled with beautiful items only big money can buy. Thus, conspicuous consumption takes over the minds of the poor, in that they too will want to acquire such items. The drive to obtain these material goods definitely is greater than their purchasing power. Thus, the obsession in many ways encourages thefts, burglary, and drug trafficking among the inner city poor (Time, 1988).

Research shows that roughly 9 percent of two-parent families with children are poor in any one year. If the

family remains intact, the poverty may be short-lived. Only one child in 50 raised in a stable two parent home will be long-term poor, before government transfers. The causes of two-parent poverty are more easily identified than those of one-parent families. These include low pay, lack of jobs, taking care of home and family, and disability which are the overwhelming problems. Such factors are in themselves discouraging and frustrating to parents and may cause them to abuse or neglect their children. Thus, because of their inherent needs for love and affection the deprived children may resort to negative escape mechanisms by adopting deviant behaviors. These behaviors are classified as: experimentation and abuse of illegal drugs, vandalism, aggression, thefts, truancy, frauds, robbery, homicide, and other offenses (Ellwood, 1987).

Society has always felt that the causative factor of delinquency is poverty within the family system. This view holds that a family with low income, which may enjoy prosperity, demonstrates relative neglect of the children by the hard-pressed parents. This may be coupled with conditions of over crowding and ecological

segregation in areas of higher delinquency risks (Barron, 1984).

In 1988, referrals to the Juvenile Court of Fulton County, Georgia reflect the pattern of recent years by continuing to increase. There was a 17 percent increase in delinquency complaints. Unruly complaints and deprivation and custody referrals rose 16 percent and 27 percent respectively. Juvenile traffic complaints, which have been handled exclusively by the Juvenile Court since 1986, rose 19 percent (Fulton County Juvenile Court, 1988).

The national problem of drug abuse continued unabated in 1988, and its effect continued to be seen in the ever rising numbers of abuse cases in the court. Drug abuse has assumed epidemic proportions in Georgia and the commission on security is working feverishly to reduce the flow of drug and drug related activities in the state.

Moreover, a 1988 statistical report on adolescent offenders who passed through the Georgia Juvenile Court system revealed drug abuse and other drug related activities have assumed epidemic proportions. Also there is an increase in the number of other serious offenses which include homicide, thefts, and violence.

Also adolescent offenders show the following: an increase in possession of dangerous drugs by 122 percent, thefts a decrease of 2 percent, fraud down by 7 percent, and vehicle theft up by 15 percent (Fulton County Juvenile Court, 1988).

In 1984, the official poverty line for a family of four was \$10,609. The children in these families were almost equally divided between homes headed by women and those headed by men. Forty-five percent of these children were Black, Hispanic or of another minority group. The statistics however, failed to explain what will happen to such poor children in the future. Would they become another statistic on the streets of tomorrow's society? According to Ellwood, (1987), such children will remain poor or turn to deviant methods as a means of survival.

A closer examination of the policies regarding socioeconomic factors stress the levels of poverty within lower-class families. The percentage of working married and single mothers are increasing steadily. The traditional family structure of the 1950s has been superseded in the 1980s by the two-wage earner family. By 1972, 52 percent of married women with children under 18 were employed outside the home. As for single

mothers 72 percent of them are in the workforce. The demographics of the single family has changed in that one of every five children under 18 lives in a single-parent family. Indeed the fastest growing segment in the labor force is mothers with young children (Googins and Burden, 1987).

Another socioeconomic factor which contributes to delinquency is the type of parents some poor children have as role models. For example, a parent may steal or cheat to survive. Therefore the child who is exposed to such deviant acts may tend to follow similar patterns. On the other hand, a father who commits delinquent acts, may not communicate these facts to his child. He may instead, instill in the child's mind a sense of obedience to societal norms. This poses the problem of double standards, because he himself does not conform.

In addition, most studies of arrests, court, and institutionalized cases reveal a large proportion of economic marginality in the families of delinquents. The occupational backgrounds of fathers of delinquents show a large number of unskilled and semiskilled workers, and there is a similar rate of employed mothers, mere so in the case of delinquent girls than

boys. A pattern of low economic status may be largely an outcome of skewness in arrest, court, and institution intake (Barron, 1956). The assumption of police and administrators is that children of such families are more likely to be delinquent and that their parents are unable to care for them. At the same time, the wealthy and otherwise privileged families are more able to shield their delinquent children from the police and courts. In other words, there may be an apparent rather than a real substantiation of the theory (Brodie, 1988).

Next, social class in relation to delinquency deals with the fact that the lower-class youth who is also stereotyped as the "underclass" is more likely to be picked up by the police, sent to juvenile court, convicted and sentenced to the juvenile prison, when he has committed the same crime as a middle-class youth. In his study of lower and middle class children, Travis Hirschi found that a small group at the bottom of the class hierarchy is more likely to be delinquent. Whereas, the children of professionals and executives are less likely to follow such patterns of behaviors. The probable difference between the two groups is that the latter is provided with conventional opportunities for satisfying their recreational interests, while the

former lack such opportunities or facilities. However, a lack of recreational facilities does not necessarily mean that all lower-class children cannot find other acceptable alternatives for their energies (Baker, 1988). Studies have been conducted that focus on sex differences and social class as it impacts delinquent behaviors. Pamela Richards, who did a study of a middle class population, found that there is little evidence which suggests marked differences in the delinquent activities reported by girls and boys (Richards, 1982). Another focus is on the impact of high school and adolescent experiences upon the relationship between social class and delinquency. A paper presented by Timothy Hartnagel established that the issue was debated in terms of two competing perspectives (Hartnagel, 1982). On the other hand, there are researchers who consider the high school as a more important source of delinquent behaviors than social class. Whereas, there is the view that the high school is best seen as the crucial intervening variable mediating the relationship between social class and delinquency. The contending perspectives were labeled the school status and class background theories of delinquency (Brodie, 1988).

Nye concluded that most attempts to clarify the relationship between juvenile delinquency and socioeconomic level indicate that delinquency is primarily a phenomenon associated with lower economic strata (Nye, 1973). Such studies utilized court records, police files, and other official documents of delinquency. These bases are adequate, within certain limitations, for an examination of "official delinquency," but are unreliable as an index of "delinquent behavior" in the general population. Estimates of the extent of delinquent behavior may be more evenly distributed in the various socioeconomic strata than official records portray.

Parental Absence and Delinquent Behavior

Dramatic changes have occurred in the marital behavior of American adults over the past 12 years. In general, the likelihood of marriage has declined, divorce has increased to a record high, and changes in the living arrangements of both adults and children have occurred. A majority of households in the U.S. are not nuclear families with both parents living with their offspring. In recent years, there was a gradual, steady increase in the percent of adults and children residing in single-parent, blended, or other households that

sometimes encompasses non related individuals (Macklin, 1980; U.S. Bureau Census, 1983d). Such extended familial arrangements formed supportive structures for the single family, especially in the areas of supervision of the children. This meant lower juvenile delinquency rates. However, the rise in the number of broken homes in which one or both parents are absent is thought to have contributed to the high incidence of juvenile delinquency. The reason being the deficiencies in parental affection and discipline (Brodie, 1988).

The 1970's dramatic 51 percent increase in the U.S. of the number of female headed families gained much public attention. Moreover, the number of families headed by women with one or more children present in the home increased by 77 percent in the last ten years. Currently, one-parent families make up over 19 percent of all American families living at home. This adds up to approximately fifteen million adults and children who are members of one-parent families (Wilson, 1987).

There are several situations creating one-parent families, including death of a spouse, divorce, separation, desertion, incarcerations, abandonment, the adoption of a child by a single person, or the birth of a child by an unmarried woman. Although the number of

single fathers is increasing, most one-parent families consist of a mother and her children. According to the data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1980), there are substantially more single-mother families than there are single-father families. Although there are only approximately 17 percent of all U.S. households headed by women, 42 percent of the women have incomes below the poverty line. Despite their added responsibilities as single-mothers, most of them have developed ways of making ends meet which shows much strength and determination (Contemporary Concerns).

In addition, the \$10 million cutback by the Omnibus budget in 1984 forced hundreds of AFDC and food stamp recipients to turn to the job market. This means that sudden decline in the mother's standard of living can affect every aspect of her children's lives, for example how they feel, what they eat, and how they live. Thus, single mothers find child-care costs so unmanageable that 7 million children under 13 years have no regular supervision while their mothers work. This lack of supervision may have contributed to deviant patterns of behaviors among some delinquent youths. But empirical studies failed to agree with this notion (Schultz-Brooks, 1983).

Wallerstein and Kelly, studied children of divorced parents five years after that incident occurred. Their studies showed that 34 percent seemed to be well adjusted, having acquired a sense of well-being and self-confidence. On the other hand, 37 percent of the children were judged to be moderately to severely depressed, exhibiting chronic and prolonged unhappiness, sexual promiscuity, drug abuse, petty theft, alcoholism, poor learning, restlessness, and intense anger and neediness. The remaining 29 percent of the children had resumed appropriate developmental progress but continued to experience intermittent periods of feeling deprived, sad, and resentful (Hamner and Turner, 1985). Social scientists have found no clear evidence that father absence is psychologically harmful to children. However, there is an economic effect. When a single mother faces her hurt and angry children, she needs the wisdom of Solomon, and the patience of Job. Her children may exhibit many signs of fear and insecurity getting in trouble at school, telling lies, criticizing her for lack of money, and refusing to talk to her. There is no doubt that financial security give children a better chance for happiness no matter how many parents are in the home (Schultz-Brooks 1983).

There is limited research on single fatherhood whether by adoption or custody. However, evidences show that such a role produces a psychological crisis for the father and children. The relationship between the father and child, child rearing, and child care can result in adjustment problems.

Studies reveal that divorced fathers tend to experience greater loss of self-esteem than do divorced women. Fathers report feeling rootless, having no structure in their lives, and the inability to concentrate on their work. Some resort to alcoholism and cigarette smoking. These problems do have an adverse effect on the children and can cause them to develop feelings of loss, insecurity, and rejection. (Hamner and Turner, 1985).

There is no doubt suggested Nye, (1973) that children of broken homes are over-represented in state institutions for delinquent children. As a category, they commit slightly more delinquent behavior in high school than those from intact homes. This means that their chances of being sent to an institution are greater. Thus, there seems to be differential reactions to their delinquent behavior from law enforcement and

judicial agencies, and even their parents and the society as well.

Therefore, the delinquent youth's patterns of behaviors stem from three trends of study in relation to why they are determined delinquent. The variables examined are the maladaptive styles of family relationship, socioeconomic factors, and absent parent in relation to delinquency.

There appears to be common threads in the biological, socialization, sociological, and psychological theories which show the understanding and appreciation of the range of elements that bear on delinquency as a social problem. These theories utilize the expansive interactions, dynamic characteristics, and the implications for change in individual or systems as they affects all others. (Goldstein, 1973).

The impact of parent-child relationship, socioeconomic levels, and absent parent on juvenile delinquency are examined in the above theories. First, the biological view sees the deviant child as having different features from the non-delinquent. These characteristics range from physical to chromosomal composition. Next, the socialization processes are seen as important stages of the growth and development of the

child. The family is the primary socialization agent in the child's life. The school, church, peers, and significant others also contribute to the child's personality. The mother, however, is looked upon by society as the main person in the process. While in the boundaries of the family unit the child is taught cultural and societal values and norms. Also, the family is expected to produce children who are well adjusted and possess the interpersonal skills that enable them to be considerate of others, show respect for adults, and cooperate with peers and others (Winters & Easton, 1983). The sociological perspective views delinquency within its social context. These include the family environment, the community in which the child lives, and other sources of interaction. These factors are integrated and contribute to juvenile delinquency if there are "cracks" in the systems. For instance, it was found that the lower the social class, the higher the rate of delinquency (Blomme, 1983).

Also in reference to this study, the psychological theory is explored. This theory holds that delinquent conduct is largely the result of childhood experiences in within the family unit. The notion is that parents are solely responsible for preparing their children for

adult life (Marshall, 1974). Therefore, it is the felt that there must be some type of positive relationship within the family in order that the youth do not express delinquent tendencies. The more favorable the relationship, the less likely a youth will become a delinquent. But there is some degree of disagreement with this statement among theorists. Some feel that a family headed by two parents are more likely to have a higher success rate than a single headed family. However, it is suggested that the success of the single-head family is found in counseling per Ann Barry, 1979.

Operational Definition

Juvenile Delinquency: A social behavior and antisocial or criminal behavior by young children, over seven years, or adolescents who commit such acts as persistent stealing, truancy, assault, and minor possession of alcohol and drugs.

Definition of Terms

Absent parent(s): One or both parents who are not living within the household with the child, divorce, or death.

Antisocial: Opposed to or interfering with the social order.

Attachment: A process that develops over the course of the first year of the child's life.

Bonding: The organization and development before birth, at birth, and immediately following birth.

Family: Persons related by blood or marriage, relatives or kinfolks. According to society, each member belongs to the same unit.

Juvenile: Young, youthful; not fully developed; not yet an adult, ranging from ages 7-16.

Juvenile delinquency: a child or adolescent, 7-16 years, who exhibits antisocial, or criminal behaviors on a persistent basis.

Parent-child relationship: Interactions between parent and child which may range from good to bad.

Social-economic level: A person's social and economic levels in reference to their annual income.

Socialization: The process by which individuals learn and internalize the appropriate attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of a particular culture.

Statement of Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the parent-child relationship and delinquent behavior in juveniles.

There is no significant relationship between the absence of one or both parent(s) and juvenile delinquency.

There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic factors and juvenile delinquency.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher had used secondary data in this study which was taken from Sarah Brodie (1988).

The cross-sectional survey design was used in the planning of this study. This is the collecting of data to determine whether the relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables. The degree of relationship exists in a form of correlations coefficient, which is RXO (R = random sample of population, x = administration of the independent variable, o = observation of the dependent variable).

Sampling

The Cobb County Juvenile Court of Marietta, Georgia was selected as the location for acquiring participants for this study. This site was selected as it provides services to juvenile delinquents in Cobb County. The Cobb County Juvenile Court began its service to the community in March of 1952. In 1973, the Cobb County Juvenile Hall was deeded to the State of Georgia, and it

is now operated by the Georgia Department of Human Resources as a Regional Youth Development Center which provides both detention for juvenile offenders and shelter care for deprived children. Throughout the past several years, the court has continued to distinguish itself as a model juvenile court through the implementation of new programs and unique approaches to the problems of troubled youth and juvenile justice delivery.

In conducting the study, the probation department was largely used. Basic to the proper functioning of the court is the enforcement of court orders, which is the primary responsibility of the case-load probation officers. The case-load probation officers monitor closely the behavior of children who have been placed on probation or under court supervision. Normally, such orders of probation include specific terms to which the child must adhere in order to successfully complete probation. Case-load probation officers must ensure that each youngster assigned to them abides by the probation conditions. If the child fails to comply, the probation officers must remedy such non-compliance or move the court to consider revocation of the child's probation. In addition to this law

enforcement aspect of the probation officer's duties, he must also serve as a counselor and confidant for each child, assisting the youngster in making a satisfactory adjustment to his role in society.

Children who are adjudicated as delinquent or unruly are assigned to probation officers and these were the youth that were used for this study. The youth were placed on probation for various acts of burglary, assault, minor possession of drugs or alcohol, traffic violations, runaway, and truancy. These youth were randomly selected. They came from various ethnic groups and religious backgrounds, and ranged from the ages of 6 to 16. The distribution of 50 questionnaires was given to the 10 probation officers who randomly selected youth from their case loads to complete the questionnaire. The probation officers conducted the interview with the youth due to confidentiality and returned the completed questionnaires.

Instrumentation

In order to explore the impact of parent-child relationships, socioeconomic level and parental absence upon delinquent behaviors in juveniles, it was decided that secondary information from studies already conducted would be a useful tool, however, in order to

make the variables impact on delinquent behavior it was determined that the most valuable method would be to survey youth who were involved in the juvenile court system. The main tool for the survey was the questionnaire. The items for the questionnaire came from the Clinical Measurement Package developed by Walter Hudson (1974). The questionnaire consisted of items pertaining to deviancy, child's attitude towards mother (CAM), child's attitude towards father (CAF), index of family relations (IFR). The questionnaire consisted of 48 items.

Statistical Analysis

For the purpose of this study, Chi square, Cramer's V, and Pearson's R were used. Chi square (X^2) is a nonparametric test of significance for differences between two or more samples whereby expected frequencies are compared against obtained frequencies. The values range from .05 to .01 levels of confidence. Cramer's V is an alternative to the contingency coefficient which measures the degree of association for nominal data. Pearson's R (R) is also used in determining if there is a relationship between two or more variables and utilizes interval level data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Chi Square and Pearson's R were used in looking at the significance of the relationship between the independent variables of parent-child relationship, socioeconomic level and parental absence and the dependent variable of delinquent behaviors in juveniles. For the purpose of looking at the data in concrete terms, the means and standard deviation are computed in table form. The variables of socioeconomic level and parental absence of either parent are tabulated demographically concentrating on frequency and percentage.

Table 1 describes the means and standard deviation of delinquent behavior in looking at various activities of youth who exhibit delinquent behaviors.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 show the means and standard deviation of the child's attitude toward his or her mother, father, and family as a whole.

Tables 5 and 6 demographically describe the frequency and percentage of parental absence of either parent and the family income level.

TABLE 1
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF
DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR

Items	Means	Standard Deviation
1. Fight with Parents	1.723	1.155
2. Hit an Instructor	4.362	1.293
3. Gotten into Serious Fight	3.660	1.290
4. Taken Part in a Fight	3.766	1.322
5. Hurt Someone Badly	4.191	1.393
6. Used a Knife or Gun	4.574	1.058
7. Taken Something Worth Under \$50	3.191	1.362
8. Taken Something Worth Above \$50	3.511	1.627
9. Taken Something from Store	3.234	1.521
10. Taken Part of a Car without Permission	4.255	1.206
11. Gone into Someone's House Without Permission	3.574	1.281
12. Set Fire On Property	4.234	1.463
13. Damaged School Property on Purpose	4.298	1.267
14. Damaged Property on Purpose	4.511	1.231

TABLE 1 (continued)
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF
DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR

Items	Means	Standard Deviation
15. Runaway From Home	3.681	1.235
16. Have Drunken Liquor	2.340	1.605

TABLE 2
Means and Standard Deviation
of Child's Attitude Towards Mother

Item	Means	Standard Deviation
1. I Get Along with My Mother	3.404	1.280
2. I Can Really Trust My Mother	4.106	1.202
3. I Really Enjoy My Mother	3.447	1.230
4. My Mother Is Terrific	3.574	1.137
5. My Mother Is Patient With Me	3.383	1.453
6. I Really Like My Mother	3.766	1.237
7. I Like Being With My Mother	3.383	1.226
8. I Feel Proud of My Mother	3.553	1.380
9. I Can Depend On My Mother	3.660	1.307

TABLE 3
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION
OF CHILD'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS FATHER

Item	Means	Standard Deviation
1. I Get Along Well with My Father	3.191	1.541
2. I Can Really Trust My Father	3.319	1.576
3. I Really Enjoy My Father	3.191	1.527
4. My Father Is Terrific	3.064	1.495
5. My Father Is Patient With Me	3.191	1.541
6. I Really Like My Father	3.170	1.508
7. I Like Being With My Father	3.170	1.523
8. I Feel Proud of My Father	3.213	1.531
9. I Can Depend On My Father	3.213	1.667

TABLE 4
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION
OF INDEX OF FAMILY RELATIONS

Item	Means	Standard Deviation
1. My Family Cares About Each Other	3.851	1.063
2. My Family is Terrific	3.426	1.175
3. I Really Enjoy My Family	3.489	1.120
4. I Can Really Depend On My Family	3.532	1.231
5. I Get Along With My Family	3.426	1.156
6. Family Members Are Good To One Another	3.340	1.166
7. Members of Family Are Well Respected	3.489	1.196
8. There Is Love In My Family	3.468	1.213
9. My Family Gets Along Well	3.340	1.128
10. My Family Is A Great Joy To Me	3.489	1.177
11. I Feel Proud of My Family	3.553	1.265
12. My Family Is A Source of Comfort	3.362	1.241

TABLE 5
FREQUENCY AND PERCENT OF
PARENTAL ABSENCE OF EITHER PARENT

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
1. Both Parents	14	29.8
2. Mother Only	17	36.2
3. Father Only	2	4.3
4. Mother and Step-Father	9	19.1
5. Father and Step-Mother	3	6.4
6. Other Guardian	2	4.3
TOTAL	47	100.0

TABLE 6
FREQUENCY AND PERCENT OF
FAMILY INCOME LEVELS

Item	Frequency	Percent
1. 8,000-14,000	10	21.3
2. 15,000-21,000	6	12.8
3. 22,000-28,000	8	17.0
4. 29,000-35,000	9	19.1
5. 36,000-42,000	7	14.9
6. 43,000-Above	7	14.9
TOTAL	47	100.0

HYPOTHESIS 1: There is no significant relationship between parent-child relationship and delinquent behavior.

To test for this hypothesis, the cross tabulation was performed using the SPSSX batch system to determine the relationship between parent-child relationship and delinquent behavior. The results of the statistical analysis showed $\chi^2 = 33/33$, $df = 2$, and $p > 0.005$. Thus we reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between parent-child relationship and delinquent behavior.

From the result the Cramer's V ($V = 0.84$) we can conclude that the nature of the relationship is strong. Findings from the review of literature substantiates this conclusion.

Family life is the most important interaction contributing to juvenile delinquency. John Lofland, 1969; Agnes Ng, 1980; and Ivan Nye, 1973, all conclude this in various studies they have conducted in determining the impact of family relations on delinquent behavior. Studies also indicate that females have more favorable family bonds than do males and non-delinquents than do delinquents.

The general attitude of most researchers is that there is some significant impact of parent-child relationship on delinquent behavior and depending on the impact of the family bond, this determines whether or not the child will become involved in delinquent acts. Unsatisfactory parent-child relationships have been long suspected of causing delinquency. The theory is that the child engages in delinquent and other anti-social behavior as a result of parental failure in socialization of the child. There is a decline of the family common objectives without offering substitute forms for the socialization of the child.

HYPOTHESIS 2: There is no significant relationship between parental absence of either parent and delinquent behavior.

To test this hypothesis, the cross tabulation was performed using the SPSSX batch system to determine the relationship between parental absence of either parent and delinquent behavior. The result of the statistical analysis from the cross tabulation showed $\chi^2 = 29.94$, $df = 5$, $p > 0.005$. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between parental absence of either parent and the delinquent behavior.

From the Cramer's V ($V=0.7$) we can conclude that the nature of the relationship is strong.

According to the literature, the broken home, once thought to be the prime villain of delinquency, is considered a key variable. Studies show a disagreement with regard to this theory. Some studies show a high proportion of broken homes among delinquents, whereas others show a much lower incidence of broken homes. There is also the belief of researchers that reports do not take into account that most delinquents who come from broken homes are more likely to be institutionalized than delinquents who come from families with both parents. The literature also concludes that the disproportionate number of broken home families among court and institutionalized cases may be a result of the ethnic distribution of the case.

For the most part, a major portion of the literature substantiates the results that there is a significant relationship between parental absence and delinquent behavior.

HYPOTHESIS 3: There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic factors and delinquent behavior.

To test this hypothesis, the cross tabulation was performed using the SPSSX batch system to determine the

relationship between socioeconomic level and delinquent behavior. The result of the statistical analysis from the cross tabulation showed $R = 0.72010$, $df = 5$, $p > 0.005$. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypothesis that there is significant relationship between socioeconomic level and delinquent behavior.

Some of the literature states that there is no significant relationship between socioeconomic level and delinquent behavior. Researchers believe that youth from every economic level have the potential to commit deviant acts. They conclude that delinquent behavior performed by middle and upper class youth are more likely to be recorded in police, court and statistical reports. It is the feeling of researchers that if studies were conducted from facts gathered from other sources rather than police and court reports there would be a noticeable parallel of the delinquent acts committed by middle and upper class youth with lower class youth. The wealthy and otherwise privileged families are more able to shield their delinquent children from the police and courts.

On the other hand, there is also the findings that socioeconomic level has an impact on delinquent

behavior. Some researchers have concluded from their studies that youth from lower economic levels are more likely to commit deviant acts than are youth from middle and upper classes. It was found that in Korea, official statistics indicated that criminal behavior was largely confined to lower class.

Determinants of socioeconomic level as a causation of delinquency is not yet clear. Results from the study showed a high percentage of delinquency from families in the middle to mid-upper economic strata. There is a need for further research in this area.

The literature for the most part substantiated the findings concluded from the test, although there are some questions about the reliability of various statistical data as it involves socioeconomic level and parental absence. The literature reflects that there is significant relationship between parent-child relationship, socioeconomic level and parental absence on delinquent behaviors in juveniles.

This gives some implication for the need of more understanding and theoretical knowledge in attempting to bring about change in these areas when providing services to youth who exhibit delinquent behavior in their family.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The constant increase in the delinquent behaviors among youth over the last decade has made this problem another social phenomenon. The number of youth who passed through the juvenile court during the Some theorists explained crime and delinquency as normal rather than abnormal or pathological social behavior. The term normal means the element or factor is a characteristic feature of social life. This makes it difficult to determine why some youth are deviant and others are not. Some of the answers were explained in this article which examined the variables parent-child relationship, socioeconomic factors, and absent parent as they relate to juvenile delinquency. A look at the historical and current findings suggest that there is a strong proclivity of these three variables on delinquent behaviors among youth. Historically, society believed that "troubled youngsters" who exhibited unacceptable behaviors were born that way. However, later studies have shown that a variety of social, economic, and familial factors contribute to delinquency. Theories in psychology felt that the delinquent child was a product

of instability in its family life. Next, the sociological perspective stated that delinquency must be viewed within the social context in which it occurs. Three approaches were listed by Bynum and Thompson. These are: 1) the functionalist approach, 2) the conflict approach, and 3) the interactionist approach. The increase in delinquency among youth have various implications for social work. Some suggestions were made for use in the areas of exploration, development and implementation of programs to prevent and reduce juvenile delinquency.

Limitations Of The Study

1. The study was limited to juveniles between the ages of 7 to 16.
2. This study was limited to secondary information and questionnaires on juvenile delinquency.
3. The study was limited to juveniles with a predisposition for delinquent behaviors and those who have passed through the Cobb County Juvenile Court System.

Suggested Research Directions

There is no doubt that the juvenile delinquent population is growing, therefore more studies should be done in this area. It is suggested that larger

populations which are randomly selected be used when future surveys are conducted. These will give the researcher a more accurate perception of the problem. Also more information can be obtained if more variables are utilized so that more comparative studies are explored. Some other variables include: the parents relationship immediately before, during and immediately after conception, family size and birth order, peer relations, self-esteem, and other related variables.

Surveys done should also be done on the national level to give a better picture of the social condition. The information acquired through these measures will enable and increase the social workers' knowledge, skills, and understanding of delinquency. Also effective preventive techniques and strategies can be developed and utilized. in the interventive processes.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

The various theories discussed in this presentation point to the idea that delinquent behaviors among youth are caused by either or all three factors indicated. The theories are based on known facts formulated into a system that can be used to predict other phenomenon or behavior. However, there is need for a workable theory of crime and delinquency which will assist persons in the social work profession. It will be particularly helpful in the future for designing programs and strategies to better serve and empower the clients in alternative school situations. These of course will have varied implications particularly for social workers who interact with such populations as well as those who encounter the issues of parent-child relationship, socioeconomic factors, and parental absence.

Therefore, social workers who specialized in working with families need to develop and implement programs which will better enable, empower, and enhance the life chances of their client population. In order to perform these tasks, the worker must have increased

awareness and understanding of the various causes of delinquent behaviors. Most of the current issues and interventions with which social workers are faced have shown a proclivity to working with delinquent youth and their families. Therefore, the social worker must develop a clear understanding of the predispositions, issues, and their affect on the lives of the youth and his family. This knowledge base will enable the worker to provide the necessary programs and services to decrease juvenile delinquency. This means that further research must be done in studying the causes of delinquency.

There is a dire need for social workers to intervene in the lives of families in helping them to bring about closer family bonds and quality parental skills in the socialization process of their children. These parents also need to be given various strategies in dealing with their own problems and other stressful situations. It has been suggested that there is a lack of adequate and effective communication within most families. Therefore, the social worker can educate such families on the various modes of communication so as to enhance their levels of interaction.

The wholistic and ecological approaches to social

work interventions lend themselves to the idea of the social workers viewing the client in totality and also incorporating all family members in counseling sessions. The knowledge base and competencies of the worker will determine whether s/he is equipped to perform such tasks or has to make necessary referrals. The idea is to assist and empower the clients to become self-actualized. As is well known it is unfruitful and unhealthy to bring about changes within the youth and to ignore his family environment. If left in its original state, the family situation will certainly be a breeding place for continued and more serious delinquent acts. There must be simultaneous changes within the youth and the family in order that a positive environment is created.

In addition, a rise in the number of people who are homeless impacts on the lives of young children who live in such situations. Their plight for employment and economic stability is becoming a major causative factor in juvenile delinquency. As the homeless family struggle to survive the harsh circumstances with which they are faced, many youth are forced to steal and burglarize in order to provide money and food for the homeless family. It behoove the social work profession

therefore to design and implement income, inkind, and job training programs for semi-skilled and unskilled persons in the above dilemma. Moreover, the social worker can develop job placement networks with other agencies to acquire jobs for homeless families. Closer studies should be done on families which are on welfare to ensure that the monetary and inkind benefits meet out to them provide the services they were designed to give. Also, the social workers should utilize autonomous practice skills to develop family support networks, basic education, and job training programs for recipients of welfare benefits. These programs must include a critical examination of the recipients' values and their urge to victims of conspicuous consumption. A conscience awareness of self, self-improvement, and the development of a high self-esteem will empower the clients to be strong in their decisions to live within their means. Thus, a child who may be predisposed to become delinquent may be deterred because of the inner strength found within the self. The growing number of single-parent families, especially those headed by women is alarming. Much work is needed to help such families cope with the roles of parenting. In many familial situations there is little or no structure and the

children are left unsupervised and undisciplined. Some of these unsupervised children often associate themselves with gangs in attempting to create family bonds with other outside forces. Also, there is inadequate interaction between the parents and children so as to foster and enhance the socialization process.

These inadequacies in parenting qualities are more evident in families in which the single mother work outside of their homes. These parents have the sole responsibility of providing for, and maintaining the family which leaves little time or none at all for familial interaction. Therefore, the social worker in dealing with such families need to assist the parents to set aside quality time for their children. It must be emphasized that during these sessions the parents must give their undivided attention to the children as family issues, guidance, and discipline are discussed. There is also a need for male and female mentors to work with families in which the parents are hard pressed for time in interacting with their children. These substitute role models can enhance the lives of youth whose parents are absent from the homes. Mentors have been noted to impact positively on delinquent youth. Another way in which social workers can help prevent and decrease

juvenile delinquency is to develop after school programs. Some theorists suggest that if youth are occupied with interesting and meaningful tasks after school, the chances of them becoming delinquent are lessened. Therefore, the implementation of structured after school programs can impact positively on the children's lives. The programs can be in the form of tutoring, indoor and outdoor games, group discussions on topics of interests to youth, drug education and any other activities which will help to keep predisposed youth out of trouble.

In addition, there is a need for social workers in the field of family and children to incorporate programs with the corporate business world within the youth's community. These programs should be designed, enacted, and implemented to prevent and curb the delinquent behaviors. Alliances can be formed with business management to provide education, training, and jobs for youth as work study or after school activities.

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APPENDIX

THE IMPACT OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL, AND PARENTAL ABSENCE ON DELINQUENT BEHAVIORS IN JUVENILES

This questionnaire is designed to measure the impact of parent-child relation, socioeconomic factors, and absent parents on delinquent behaviors in juveniles. It is not a test, so there are no wrong or right answers. Answer each item as carefully as you can by placing a number besides each one that follows:

1. Rarely or more of the time
2. A little of the time
3. Some of the time
4. Good part of the time
5. Most or all of the time

Please begin:

DEVIANCY

1. Argued or had a fight with either of your
parents _____
2. Hit an instructor _____
3. Gotten into a serious fight in school
or at home _____

4. Gotten into a serious fight where a group
of your friend were against another group _____
5. Hurt someone badly enough to need bandages
or a doctor _____
6. Used a knife or gun to get something from
another person _____
7. Taken something not belonging to you worth
under \$50 _____
8. Taken something not belonging to you worth
over \$50 _____
9. Taken from a store without paying for it _____
10. Taken part of a car without permission
of the owner _____
11. Gone into some house or building when you
weren't suppose to be there _____
12. Set fire to someone's property on purpose _____
13. Damaged school property on purpose _____
14. Damaged property at work on purpose _____
15. Run away from home _____
16. Drank beer or liquor without parents'
permission _____

Answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can by placing a number beside each one as follows:

1. Rarely or none of the time
2. A little of the time
3. Some of the time
4. Good part of the time
5. Most or all of the time

Please begin:

Child's Attitude Toward Mother (CAM)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. I get along well with my mother | _____ |
| 2. I feel that I can trust my mother | _____ |
| 3. I really enjoy my mother | _____ |
| 4. I think my mother is terrific | _____ |
| 5. My mother is very patient with me | _____ |
| 6. I really like my mother | _____ |
| 7. I like being with my mother | _____ |
| 8. I feel proud of my mother | _____ |
| 9. I can really depend on my mother | _____ |

Child's Attitude Toward Father (CAF)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. I get along well with my father | _____ |
| 2. I feel that I can trust my father | _____ |
| 3. I really enjoy my father | _____ |
| 4. I think my father is terrific | _____ |
| 5. My father is very patient with me | _____ |

6. I really like my father _____
7. I like being with my father _____
8. I feel proud of my father _____
9. I can really depend on my father _____

Index of Family Relations (IFR)

1. The members of my family really care about
each other _____
2. I think my family is terrific _____
3. I really enjoy my family _____
4. I can really depend on my family _____
5. I can get along well with my family _____
6. Members of my family are really good
to one another _____
7. My family is well respected by those
who know us _____
8. There is a lot of love in my family _____
9. Members of my family get along well
together _____
10. My family is a great joy to me _____
11. I feel proud of my family _____
12. My family is a real source of comfort
to me _____

Answer the following items with a circle

Parent-Child Relations

1. I live with both my parents
2. I live with my mother only
3. I live with my father only
4. I live with my mother and step-father
5. I live with my father and step-mother
6. I live with another guardian

Socioeconomic Level

1. My family income is between

0-7,000

8,000-14,000

15,000-21,000

22,000-28,000

29,000-35,000

36,000-42,000

43,000 and over